

March 3, 2014

Dear Distinguished Members of the House Health Policy Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide some feedback regarding amendment to the Michigan Mental Health Code allowing for a common credentialing platform regarding substance abuse counseling services. The most recent Mental Health and Wellness Commission process has brought to light the need for streamlining care within the State as well as reducing redundant barriers that place obstacles in the path of service delivery to our most vulnerable citizens. One such issue that can help in the process of making our system more responsive would be a common credentialing platform for State agencies purchasing substance abuse services. A common credentialing approach modeled after the largest system of provision of substance abuse services in the State (the Michigan Department of Community Health system) would allow for improved efficiencies, responsiveness, and ensure adequate staffing available to meet the needs of those impacted by substance abuse issues.

As a non-profit behavioral health provider across multiple counties in the rural Upper Peninsula, there is a need for a common credentialing platform across State departments such as the Department of Human Services, Department of Corrections, Community Mental Health Centers, and Pre-Paid Inpatient Health Plans (to name few entities). A recent study of statewide agencies revealed that while they are all funded with state general fund dollars, they each require slightly different credentials in their contracts in order to provide substance abuse counseling services. This becomes a significant issue when trying to manage service delivery. Simply stated, if a counselor meets the criteria for provision of services through the Michigan Department of Community Health system, should they not also be able to provide services to other state departments? Our system does not have the funds nor the personnel to have separate operating systems for various State departments all for the same type of services needed.

The State of Michigan has a current system in place through the Michigan Certification Board for Addiction Professionals (MCBAP) that serves as a credentialing body certifying counselors. The MCBAP certification process allows for a system of qualification and standard across the State. Counselors can work toward their certification as it takes a balance of education, testing, and experience to attain such credential. Another facet to this is that a counselor can work under a development plan through supervision on their way to full certification. We fully support the MCBAP



Our mission is to empower people to improve their lives by offering comprehensive, personalized recovery services in communities throughout the Upper Peninsula.



certification process and the Michigan Department of Community Health approach as the common platform throughout the State.

We are concerned about the seemingly fractured service delivery model surrounding behavioral health throughout the State of Michigan and would like to see greater cooperation and streamlining of services between such entities as the Michigan Department of Corrections, the Office of Veterans Affairs, Department of Human Services, Health Plans, and the Community Mental Health system. The fractured nature of these systems often creates a silo in which services are delivered and places barriers on access and resources.

As a provider of rural based services, current credentialing and accreditation requirements is often a barrier to develop the workforce needed to meet the demands of the industry and contractual requirements. We encourage the streamlining of multiple credentialing mandates from such entities as insurance providers, health plans, coordinating agencies, DHS, MDOC, and other systems within the State to establish a uniform and realistic credentialing platform.

We would like to thank the Legislature for the opportunity to provide testimony today via this letter. I can be reached through email at [gtoutant@greatlakesrecovery.org](mailto:gtoutant@greatlakesrecovery.org), or via phone at (906) 228-9699, ext: 12 for any further comments or questions.

Respectfully,

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